A CONSTANTINOPLE ABDUCTION.

By Clarence Herbert New.

THERE are numerous diplomatic receptions every season in Paris, for which a traveler may easily obtain cards through his national representative. It was at one of these that I met Miss Evans, a young lady born in the American Consulate at Smyrna, and, consequently, a countrywoman of mine.

Her interest in everything American led to my monopolizing the greater part of her time during the evening, and as she happened to be a guest of my friend, Lady B., in the Avenue Victor Hugo, we soon became fast friends.

Up to the age of forty I had escaped matrimony, and having tendencies toward club life, corpulency and early baldness, it seemed more than likely that I should remain a bachelor for the rest of my days; but there was something so natural and refreshing, so honestly unconventional, in Miss Evans' personality that I began to imagine all sorts of impossibilities. We saw each other every day, and many hours in the day. We had ourselves photographed—ostensibly for Lady B.'s benefit—and roamed about the beautiful city with a chaperon only too willing to laugh away all ideas of espionage and busy herself with her own affairs. And when we parted, Miss Amy to join her family, via the Oriental express, and I to journey Londonward on the Club Train, it was with the mutual promise to write as frequently as possible.

For several months the letters came and went regularly and with entire satisfaction to the recipients, so far as I could judge from my own feeling in the matter. Then—the usual mail failed to bring her letter. I laid it to postal delay, or, possibly, some family trouble at which she had hinted in her last; but after three weeks had passed I concluded she had determined to terminate the correspondence for reasons of her own. This apparent winding up of our acquaintance—friendship I had called it—was more of a disappointment than any one would have supposed to a man of my years and fixed habits, and my wanderings over the face of the earth became more erratic than ever.

Several times I was on the point of sailing for Smyrna to look her up but a man hates to make a break of that kind in the face of a woman's evident disinclination to continue the acquaintance. When the cable news from Turkey began to assume a threatening aspect, however, I decided that the voyage would benefit my refractory liver, even if the services of an able bodied man should not be necessary to the Evans family—so booked passage on a steamer bound for Greek and Turkish ports.

It happened to be one of those little Messageries boats, the officers of which refer one so calmly and conclusively to "L'Administration a Marseille," when questioned regarding some trifling matter, as a wind sail in one's port, or an extra blanket up in the Aegean Sea. The passengers were the usual mixture of all nationalities—Greeks and Jews the most in evidence—but my roommate, fortunately, proved to be a Bostonian, as genial a traveling companion as one could wish.

When we were going through the Messina Strait, some time after midnight, Brown and I were discussing so many matters of interest that we concluded to make a night of it—helped along by wine and cigars.

He was thoroughly conversant with the inside workings of Turkish politics, and explained so clearly far reaching causes which had contributed to the Armenian atrocities, that I wondered matters hadn't reached a crisis long before. The conversation presently drifted around to European residents in Turkey, and I asked him if he had ever met the Evans family. He seemed to start a little at the question and said abruptly:

"Which Evanses do you mean, the H. T's, in Erzerum, or Samuel S.'s in Smyrna?"

"Samuel S.'s, I presume—they live in Smyrna, anyhow."

"When were you there last?"

"Never saw the place—I met Miss Amy in Paris last April."

"Oh-h-h—yes. I remember now. She spent a month with Lady Something-or-other—friend of her father's. You didn't have time to get very well acquainted, I suppose?"

"That depends on what you call 'well acquainted.' The recent cable reports started me out of comfortable quarters in Algiers with the determination to place my services at the family's disposal, in case they should need them."

"Hm-m-m—guess you must be the man she mentioned so often when she came back. I know the Evanses very well, indeed, have known them for years; and the only reason I ask what you may consider impertinent questions is because we are approaching a country where the unexpected always happens, where human life is a constant gamble, and where the events of to-morrow are 'Kismet.' We foreigners drift into Turkey with an abiding faith in consular protection, which disappears on closer acquaintance with the country. From Smyrna there are but two short railways as far as Kassaba and Aidin—from Constantinople and Scutari three. Telegraphic communication is unknown in the interior. Sometimes things run along for a year or two without an event among the European population shocking enough to appear in the outside press but Turkey is the most uncertain place on earth to live in. Why, man, there are people on this very steamer who risk their lives the very moment they set foot on Galata Bridge next week!

"I've bad news for you concerning the Evanses—news that you might whistle for if I had any real doubt of your being the friend of Miss Amy's you claim to be. The old gentleman died very suddenly last Summer; and Fred, the only boy, was killed in some trouble up in Aidin. They were importers of hardware, firearms and manufacturing implements, and in some way got the Turkish authorities down upon them. In fact, they say that Sam's death was caused by the usual trouble with his coffee. Well—Mrs. Evans and Miss Amy were no match for the officials there, and were robbed of practically the whole estate. Some of their friends tried to save a little from the wreck, but matters were approaching a climax and they were warned to mind their own business. You know people may have every confidence that their national war ships will eventually appear in the harbor and shell the town in their defense, but—suppose they shouldn't appear in time? See?

"I believe Mrs. Evans did manage to save London bills amounting to eight hundred pounds or so, and she left, with Miss Amy, for H. T.'s home in Erzerum. They hadn't been there two weeks when that section of the country got red hot, and it became a question of getting back to the consulate in Stamboul, if they could. Grattan Pasha—you've seen his name in Central News dispatches, as leader of the 'Young Turkey' movement—happened to be in Erzerum at the time, and as Sam had been an old friend, offered the ladies his protection if they were willing to pass as members of his harem. They were only too glad of the chance and went down to Trebizond with two other ladies, supposed to be also of Grattan's household. But the nervous strain was too much for Mrs. Evans—I think she drank some of the water up country too—and she died at sea before the ship reached Stamboul.

"This left Miss Amy alone in the world and at the mercy of Mustafa Bey, a Smyrna official, who had seen her in Paris, as it would have been impossible for him to do in a Turkish house, and had sworn to obtain possession of her. He tried twice to abduct her after Sam's death, but in some miraculous way she escaped. When the girl returned to Stamboul, Mustafa told the Sultan that she had been betrothed to him by her father, and Grattan Pasha had to marry her himself to settle the matter"——

"What! Do you mean to tell me that she is actually the wife of a Turk?"

"No, not quite so bad as that. So far as I've been able to find out—that is, up to three weeks ago—Grattan merely went through the usual Turkish ceremony, and then sent Miss Evans to some suburban konak, where she would be safe until he could get her out of the country; but he has never visited her except in the way of a friendly call. Then Grattan Pasha isn't a Turk at all. He is one of our own countrymen who has risen rapidly in power. He financiered a loan which made the Sultan his bosom friend, and is so strongly in favor of enforcing old Midhat's constitution that the Reform party consider him their strongest hope—short of a revolution. As a matter of fact, however, he is playing a game which beats chess all hollow. The slightest mistake means death to him—possibly the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire. And the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire means a European war. I'm afraid the fate of one friendless girl is too small a pawn upon the great board; the worst of it is, her case is only one of hundreds."

"But surely, with your evident acquaintance in Stamboul and my own knowledge of the place, we should be able to find where Grattan is keeping her. Hang it all, Brown, you wouldn't leave the poor girl without making an effort to save her, would you?"

"Certainly not, provided such an effort were not sure to fail and make her position ten times worse. Unmentionable things sometimes happen in Turkey. I've been worried more than I can tell you about Miss Evans, but it would be useless for me to make any attempt alone—I am too well known, too likely to be watched."

"Well, what do you suggest?"

"Hm-m-m-m—are you willing to risk your life in an affair of this kind? It's no fool's job to trace the young lady and get her safely out of the country.

"Why, I suppose so. I think a great deal of Miss Evans. The fact is—I couldn't stay in Algiers after reading those dispatches. Still, I'm not much of a fighter—oh, shucks, Brown, I guess you're trying to scare me a little. I've been in some scrapes and come out again all right. With that crowd of war ships at Salonika, it'll be mighty queer if we can't put an American girl on some homeward bound steamer."

"Don't be too sure of that; and don't mention either this matter or Turkish politics again until I tell you it's safe to do so."

Somehow I felt that Brown's warning was not an idle one, and avoided the subject during the balance of the week. The Sea of Marmora was thick with fog when we steamed out of the Dardanelles, and in an hour more the air was filled with snow. As we approached the Princes' Isles, however, it began to clear, and entering the Bosphorus we had a most enchanting view of the city.

Since Missiri's old Hotel d'Angleterre ran down so badly I had usually made the Byzance my headquarters in Pera, but Brown recommended a new place further up the Grande Rue, and we drove there instead. There were a dozen private houses in which we would have been welcome, but our being at a hotel seemed less likely to attract attention.

Brown had mentioned being interested in Batoum oil, so I was not surprised to see him drive off next morning with three dignified old Turks, whom I took to be brokers, in spite of the showy uniform worn by one of them—nearly every official in the empire speculates in something, whether it be oil, fruit or Circassians. He didn't return until late in the afternoon, and dinner was over before he suggested my taking a walk with him.

We sauntered along until we came to the Galata Tunnel, rode down in evil smelling cars lowered by an old square cable, and finally emerged below near one end of the Valide Bridge. As we started to cross it, the vast mass of Stamboul rose before us dark as the infernal regions, for though there is now more of an attempt at lighting than in the days of Abdul Aziz, I doubt if there are fifty street lamps in the city, outside of the meidans and three or four of the principal sokaghs. When sure that no one was within hearing, Brown leaned against the bridge rail and asked:

"Have you succeeded in gaining any information to-day?"

"Very little. I've found that Grattan Pasha lives at Buyukdere, but that he owns a more pretentious place somewhere in Scutari and rents a small brick dwelling near the Chatladi Kapoos, on the Marmora side."

"That's right. Who told you?"

"Tregarthen, at the British Embassy. Why?"

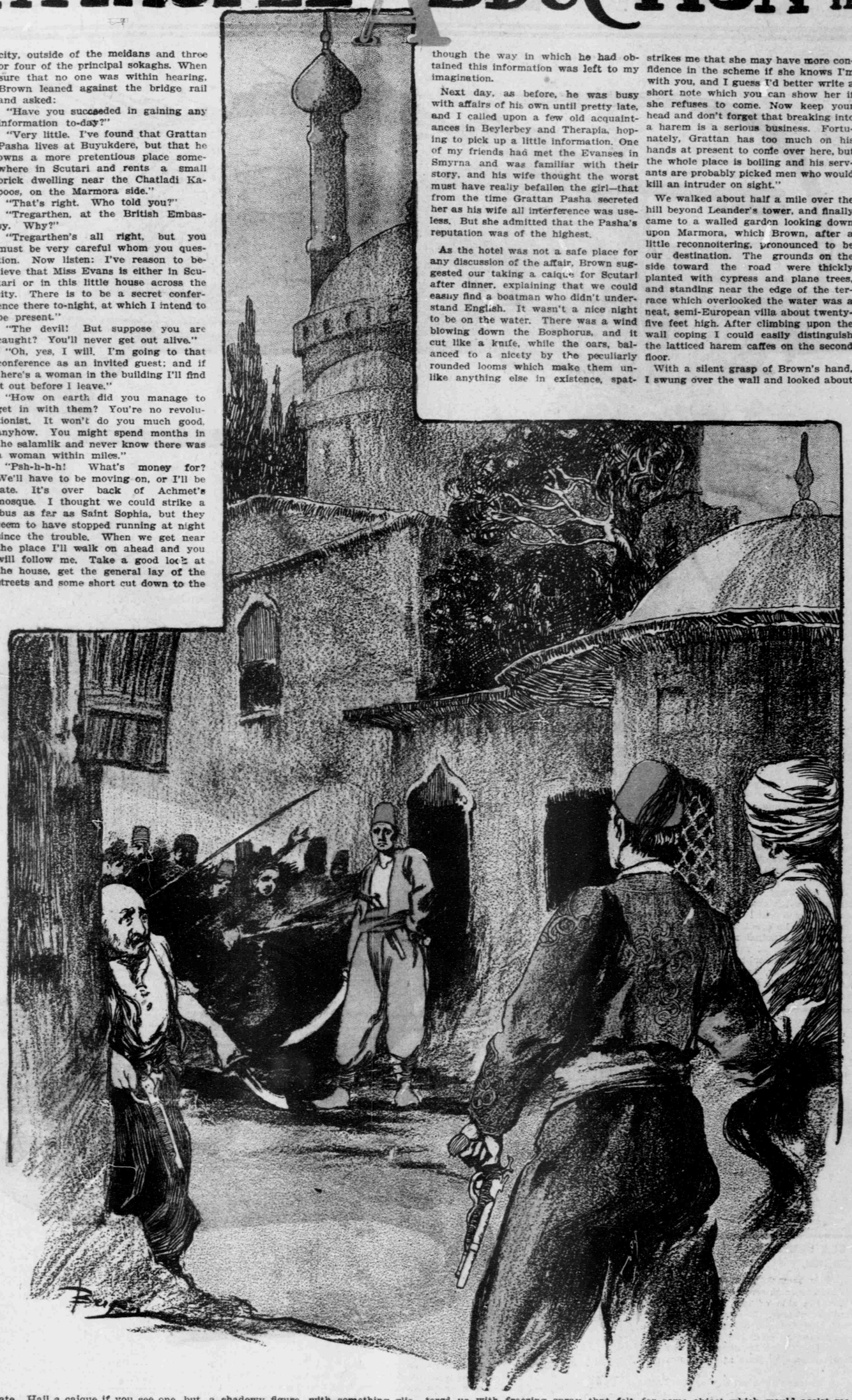
"Tregarthen's all right, but you must be very careful whom you question. Now listen: I've reason to believe that Miss Evans is either in Scutari or in this little house across the city. There is to be a secret conference there to-night, at which I intend to be present."

"The devil! But suppose you are caught? You'll never get out alive."

"Oh, yes, I will. I'm going to that conference as an invited guest; and if there's a woman in the building I'll find it out before I leave."

"How on earth did you manage to get in with them? You're no revolutionist. It won't do you much good, anyhow. You might spend months in the salamlik and never know there was a woman within miles."

"Psh-h-h-h! What's money for? We'll have to be moving on, or I'll be late. It's over back of Achmet's mosque. I thought we could strike a 'bus as far as Saint Sophia, but they seem to have stopped running at night since the trouble. When we get near the place I'll walk on ahead and you will follow me. Take a good look at the house, get the general lay of the streets and some short cut down to the



gate. Hail a caique if you see one, but go back to Pera as soon as you get the bearings. We can't do anything before two or three o'clock, and it's not a nice neighborhood to hang about in.

After my friend had disappeared beneath the overhanging balcony of Grattan Pasha's house I began to think I wasn't the right kind of a man to assist young women from serious predicaments. Cold shivers ran down my back, and I expected every moment that some rascally Turk would pop out of a doorway and stick a knife into me, for mere amusement if for no other reason.

While I was trying to get my bearings an echo of voices made me shrink into the nearest doorway. By this time I had reasoned myself into a sort of Dutch courage which come to a man when he more than half expects to be killed and wants to have it over with—anything rather than suspense. So, reaching to the low window sill, I drew myself up until I could look under the edge of the Persian carpet which had been used to deaden the sound—the rotten casing being full of cracks.

The room was well lighted, and seated upon divans were ten grave and dignified Turks in gorgeous costumes—among them my friend Brown, chatting as easily and unconcernedly as though he had every right to be of the party, and with no apparent consciousness that his presence there was a piece of sheer, unmitigated bluff.

He talked Turkish so well that the few words I knew were hopelessly swamped in an ocean of others which I didn't, and I could form no intelligent idea of the proceedings. In a moment, however, I had affairs of my own to look after. The lower door opened and a shadowy figure, with something glistening in its hand shuffled out. Without waiting for explanations I dropped and ran as if the devil was after me. He was, too, and fired a few bullets which knocked bits of whitewashed stucco about my ears as I lumbered around the first corner.

In the course of my life I've forgotten many things. I shall probably forget many more, but getting out of Stamboul that night won't be one of them. In the first place, a middle aged fat man isn't exactly built for sprinting, and when he does run he wants plenty of room. If he has been raised in a civilized country he hates to spoil his clothes by falls and collisions.

I didn't make for the butcher's gate, because the neighborhood was bad enough as it was, and I'd no idea which way to start. I ran back the way we had come—around the Mosque of Achmet, through the At Meidan, past St. Sophia, at a killing pace—then followed the car track along by the Seraglio Wall to Galata Bridge. I stumbled in and out of countless holes, stepped on, was bitten and howled at by several hundred dogs, collided with and was roundly cursed in many languages by ghosty figures here and there, and finally leaned against the bridge rail for breath, my heart pumping like a puisometer. Why none of those prowling figures stabbed me when I ran into them I've never been able to figure out.

Brown returned an hour or two after midnight, and beyond asking me in a curious way if I had been hurt, treated my narrow escape as merely an incident. He said that the building in which the meeting had taken place was merely used by Grattan Pasha as a rendezvous, and contained no harem, though the way in which he had obtained this information was left to my imagination.

Next day, as before, he was busy with affairs of his own until pretty late, and I called upon a few old acquaintances in Beylerbey and Therapia, hoping to pick up a little information. One of my friends had met the Evanses in Smyrna and was familiar with their story, and his wife thought the worst must have really befallen the girl—that from the time Grattan Pasha secreted her as his wife all interference was useless. But she admitted that the Pasha's reputation was of the highest.

As the hotel was not a safe place for any discussion of the affair, Brown suggested our taking a caique for Scutari after dinner, explaining that we could easily find a boatman who didn't understand English. It wasn't a nice night to be on the water. There was a wind blowing down the Bosphorus, and it cut like a knife, while the oars, balanced to a nicety by the peculiarly rounded looms which make them unlike anything else in existence, spattered us with freezing spray that felt like hail.

In midstream we passed the British despatch boat Imogene, lying at anchor with her fires banked, and looking like a yacht with her fine, graceful lines. Brown motioned for me to look at her closely, and said:

"Fix her exact position in your mind. Sir Philip obtained the Sultan's consent that the Dryad also should come up from Salonika, but the old man has turned ugly and ordered her back. The Imogene is to take despatches down to the fleet about midnight—Sir Philip thinks a crisis may be imminent."

"Then—you hope to find Miss Evans this evening and think that—I see! Good idea! A British cruiser would be the safest place in this vicinity. She's in the Scutari house, then, is she?"

"She must be. It's not far, and I can easily find the place, but you'll have to exercise your own ingenuity about getting in. It would be disastrous to others besides myself if I were found in the harem of a Turkish official, so I'll wait outside. By the way, another complication has just occurred to me; If you find Miss Amy, her nerves may be so upset that she will hesitate about escaping with you——"

"I don't think so at all; give me two minutes' talk with her and I'll answer for her decision. Why, Brown, put yourself in her place—wouldn't you give anything to get away?"

"I suppose I might" (there was a peculiar expression on his face as he spoke), "provided I were sure that my rescuer wasn't likely to jump me from the frying pan into the fire. She may not take much stock in the unaided efforts of one man—in this locality. It strikes me that she may have more confidence in the scheme if she knows I'm with you, and I guess I'd better write a short note which you can show her if she refuses to come. Now keep your head and don't forget that breaking into a harem is a serious business. Fortunately, Grattan has too much on his hands at present to come over here, but the whole place is boiling and his servants are probably picked men who would kill an intruder on sight."

We walked about half a mile over the hill beyond Leander's tower, and finally came to a walled garden looking down upon Marmora, which Brown, after a little reconnoitering, pronounced to be our destination. The grounds on the side toward the road were thickly planted with cypress and plane trees, and standing near the edge of the terrace which overlooked the water was a neat, semi-European villa about twenty-five feet high. After climbing upon the wall coping I could easily distinguish the latticed harem caffes on the second floor.

With a silent grasp of Brown's hand, I swung over the wall and looked about for some object which would assist me in climbing to the roof. An attempt to force an entrance below would have been worse than useless; but except for the drying of clothes, the roof is seldom used by your Turk in cool weather. Even in the Summer the men prefer seating themselves in the garden, the upper regions being women's territory.

Presently I stumbled upon a long pole, used in season as a grapevine support, and easily pulled it loose. This reached just above an oriel window, from which I was able to swing upon the main roof with little difficulty. A hatchway and ladder were at one side, and I cautiously descended. Some one was playing a piano softly in one of the harem rooms and I thought the music sounded like a Schumann melody which had been one of Miss Amy's favorites.

Step by step I stole along the passage, holding my breath at every creak of the boards. It was new business for me, and, as I've previously intimated, I never amounted to much as a fighting man. My knock upon the door sounded like thunder, though I tried to muffle it, and Miss Amy's voice answered breathlessly:

"Who is it?"

I was afraid to speak, so gently opened the door, and, with one finger upon my lips, stepped inside. My presence was so entirely unexpected that she had some difficulty in choking back a scream. Then, taking both my hands in hers, she whispered:

"How did you ever manage to get into this house? How did you find me? You mustn't stay a second! Hassan and Gregorio are down stairs—they would kill you without a moment's hesitation. Why did you attempt it?"

"Because—well, never mind that now, Miss Amy; we have got no time to lose. Get your things together as quickly as you can. Providence permitting, I'll have you in a safe place before morning. Come now, hurry!"

"Oh, dear—you don't know what you are saying; it is simply impossible! We should be murdered without pity. Go—please, for my sake! I am in no immediate danger here—Grattan Pasha is a gentleman in every sense of the word. He would protect me with his life—he has already done so. But you—you are in danger every moment. Haven't I gone through enough without the responsibility of your life also? You are the last man on earth I expected to see in Turkey. Won't you——"

"Amy, listen; I came to Constantinople for the express purpose of placing you in Lady B.'s care as soon as possible. Perhaps you can guess why—perhaps you did guess and stopped writing to me for that reason. Never mind that. Grattan Pasha may protect you while he is able to do so, but—suppose anything happens to him! All sorts of things happen here. Stop and think a moment. If we get safely down to the landing place, we can leave on the British dispatch boat to-night and be perfectly safe. I'm not alone in this affair—your friend, Mr. Brown, is waiting outside——"

"Brown! What Mr. Brown? I know no one of that name! What can you mean—some one has been deceiving you for the purpose of——"

"Wait! He gave me this note for you. There's his name, 'Clifford G. Brown,' or I don't know handwriting when I see it. And there's some confoundish Turkish stuff under it—to reassure you, I suppose. Now are you satisfied?"

"Did—did Mr. Brown read—read this note to you?" faintly.

"No, we hadn't time—he scribbled it on that piece of writing paper just as we got out of the caique—said you'd be more likely to come if you knew some one else was with me. Now, my dear girl, please hurry. Every moment is precious. Can't you find a suit of man's clothes somewhere? It's no time for false modesty, Amy—you know as well as I that no woman is seen on the street at night in these times. You must obtain a disguise somewhere, or we'll never be able to get through with whole skins."

"Oh, I don't believe I ever could! Yes, I will, too! There's a spare uniform of the Pasha's in the next room, and I'll try it. Wait here, and don't make a sound."

In less than five minutes by my watch—though the hands seemed glued fast—a Turkish officer in full uniform walked through the door and I frantically grabbed under my coattail for the revolvers, thinking my last hour had come. Then I saw it was Miss Amy, and felt faint with relief. She gave me a bundle of clothes to hold, and walking over to a sandalwood tabouret, picked up a photograph in a silver frame. Her back was toward me, but she seemed to be crying. Then she took the picture from its case and slipped it into one of her pockets.

For another moment she stood looking about the room—at the handsome piano, at a pretty dress and slippers which lay upon the divan, at a de luxe copy of Loti's "Chrysantheme" upon the tabouret—then joining me at the foot of the ladder, just in time to save me from nervous prostration, she whispered:

"Poor Grattan Pasha—I hope some day I can tell him how happy and safe I have felt in his room, after all that has happened."

In fact of our imminent danger and the fact that I needed a level head, I couldn't help feeling that when something went wrong with Grattan's coffee I shouldn't wear mourning. It was rather a mean thought, considering his kindness to Amy, and I forgot it very soon. Coaxing a young lady in trousers down a long pole from the roof of a house is sufficient mental exercise to make a man forget 'most anything.

We got along beautifully until we dropped from the wall into the street. Then a crowd of softas seemed to spring from the very ground—from behind every corner. Again I felt for those miserable pistols, which by this time were pointing up and down the small of my back; but just as I lugged one out by the muzzle, Brown's voice said, close to my ear:

"Keep your head—don't shoot under any circumstances—yet. It was very fortunate that you got Miss Evans to put on that suit."

Then he shouted something in Turkish which made the crowd pause, though their murderous weapons were near enough to gleam in the moonlight. From what little I knew of the language the gist of Brown's speech seemed to be that we were friends of Grattan Pasha, that we were all right, that Grattan was all right, that everybody was all right, and that, while we'd like nothing better than to spend the evening with them, we had an important engagement in Stamboul which wouldn't keep, and so on, explaining and walking slowly away, until we were getting into a caique at the landing place before I realized that we were free of them.

The Imogene was just heaving her anchor as we pulled alongside, and I shall never forget the look which passed between Miss Amy and Brown as he parted from her at the top of the companion ladder nor the hearty grasp he gave me as he said:

"Good by, old chap; take good care of her. I may look you up in London if Miss Amy will drop me a line—she knows my address." Then he stepped into the caique and disappeared, while we steamed out toward the Dardanelles. A week more and we were safe in London.

Miss Amy knew my feeling toward her from the moment we met in Grattan's villa, but it was not until long after she had been domiciled with Lady B. that I mentioned the subject. Looking back over the history of our friendship, I believe that to have been the strongest plea in my favor.

We are waiting until the day when Brown can be present at our marriage. For Brown is—wait. I happened to ask one day about the photograph which she had put in her pocket upon that eventful night. She brought the picture from her room and handed it to me without a word.

It was an excellent likeness of Brown, in full Turkish uniform. She smiled a little at my puzzled expression and murmured: "Did you never guess who Grattan Pasha really was?"